**MEDIA ETIQUETTE**

You’re working hard to generate publicity

coverage for your business. You’ve sent

out press releases, and made your followup

calls to the local media. And now,

much to your surprise, journalists are

actually showing an interest. Unfortunately,

despite their compelling story pitches

and well-prepared press releases and

backgrounders, too many people are

caught off guard when the media does

show an interest. But if you’re not ready

to respond quickly, or you don’t provide

the press with the information they’re

looking for, they’ll drop you and move on.

To get into the media’s good graces – and

stay there – follow a few rules of etiquette.

Here are ten tips that can help you

become a bona fide media darling.

**Respond immediately.** If a reporter calls

you, return the call immediately – or as

soon as reasonably possible. Even if you

don’t know what they want, call them

back. If you wait a day or two to return

a phone call their deadline may have

passed, and you will have missed your

chance to be in a story or on their show.

Journalists will often remember the

experience, and probably won’t call again.

**Keep your promise.** In a recent

discussion with an editor, she told me of

an individual who said he would send

some background information but then

never did. That person missed an

opportunity to be the lead on a story. If

you promise to send information to a

journalist, follow through.

**Think beyond self-promotion.** No

media contact is going to want to be

your pitchman. Publicity is not meant

to replace advertising or other marketing

strategies. When suggesting stories,

thinking in terms of how you can provide

value to an editor or reporter, while having

them make mention of your product or

service. If there is no other rule of etiquette,

remember this one – the media doesn’t

owe you anything. Make a compelling

case for your story idea by looking

beyond your product to a broader issue

or topic that your product relates to.

**Make it easy for them.** Journalists will

be grateful for whatever you can do to

make their research on a story easier. If you

have access to information that provides

context for the story you are pitching, be

sure to offer them. When scheduling

interviews, be as open as possible. And

ask them how you can help them or what

additional information you can provide.

**No gifts.** I recently sent a bottle of wine

to a TV producer. It was a simple gesture

meant to thank him for taking the time to

work with me. I should have known

better. He sent it back to me. Don’t give

the media a gift – not even thank them

for coverage. It can be seen as bribery.

Send a simple thank-you note instead; it

will be well appreciated.

**Never cancel or reject an interview.**

If you have a reporter calling you for an

interview, accept it. Even if it isn’t a precise

match with the type of coverage that you

want, it is a valuable way to build relationships

with reporters and establish your

profile as a source. If you have accepted

an interview, follow through on it. Don’t

change your mind later or let something

else get in the way. Stick to your

commitment.

**Stay in touch – with reasonable**

**frequency.** There is no reason why you

shouldn’t stay in touch with any media

contacts you have. Just be careful not to

overdo it. And take care that when you do

contact them, you have something

valuable to offer: a new story idea, a new

product develop- ment or something truly

newsworthy. Take care not to be a pest.

**Listen when they say no.** If a media

contact is not interested in your story,

they are not interested. No means no.

However, until you get a no, don’t assume

they are not interested. Be persistent, but

not annoying. Follow up on a story until

you get someone to indicate a definite no.

Don’t give up just because you get no

response. But when someone says no,

then drop it.

**You cannot see the article or show**

**before it runs, so don’t ask.** It may be

tempting, but it is inappropriate. Any

reputable publication will not allow you

to influence the editorial flavour of the

publication. It is, however, completely

acceptable to ask the reporter to read your

quotes back to you. Most reporters will

agree to do this.

**Suggest another story or a followup**

**piece.** If you have been covered by an

editor or reporter, contact them again to

suggest a piece about “the rest of the

story”. Maybe you have won an entrepreneurial

award or been recognized by

an industry analyst. Perhaps your product

has been adopted by a large,

multinational firm. Be creative and keep

up the momentum.